

**HB 5959 and HB 5804  
December 3, 2014**

**Statement of Nancy Schlichting, CEO, Henry Ford Health System, to Hon. Frank Foster, Chair, Commerce Committee**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of amending the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. My name is Nancy Schlichting, Chief Executive Officer of Henry Ford Health System. Henry Ford is one of the largest health providers in Michigan and a national leader in clinical care, research and education. A recipient of the 2011 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, the system includes the 1,200-member Henry Ford Medical Group, five hospitals, Health Alliance Plan, Henry Ford Physician Network, a 150-site ambulatory network and many other health-related business units throughout southeast Michigan, providing a full continuum of care. We are a major economic driver in Michigan with nearly \$4.5 billion in revenue last year, and more than 23,000 employees.

**Henry Ford Health System strongly supports amending the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. The time is now to move this bill through the legislature and provide the Governor with the opportunity to sign it into law.**

Henry Ford Health System is deeply committed to diversity as a fundamental value central to its mission. As an anchor in community for 100 years, we value and embrace the wealth of diversity reflected in our patients, their families, our workforce, business partners, throughout the many communities we serve. To provide world-class health care we must anticipate, inquire and respond to the dynamics of an ever-changing world. We do this by embracing and leveraging the wealth of diversity for our patients, employees and community partners.

As CEO of one of the largest employers in the state, I ask that you support this amendment. Michigan is on the road to economic recovery and our state cannot afford to lose top talent to states that recognize the value of acceptance and diversity. At Henry Ford we create a welcoming environment that embraces diversity at all levels by providing equitable, inclusive care for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender patients and their families. This commitment was recognized in 2013 when the Human Rights Campaign recognized Henry Ford as a leader in LGBT Healthcare Equality because we met key criteria for equitable care, including non-discrimination policies for LGBT patients and employees, a guarantee of equal visitation for same-sex partners and parents, and LGBT health education for key staff members.

But this is not enough so long as it is still legal to fire someone, deny them housing, or otherwise discriminate against them in public accommodations because they are gay or transgender. Our state laws must send a clear message that discrimination, disrespect, and intolerance is not acceptable.

There are strong public health reasons for making this correction. We cannot reduce health care disparities unless we also reduce social and structural inequalities. There is no question that people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) are members of every community, all races and ethnicities, all ages, and all socioeconomic statuses. And yet, as is well documented in the scientific literature, social inequality is often associated with poorer health status such that members of the LGBT community are often at increased risk for a number of health threats due to the stigma and discrimination that LGBT populations experience. <http://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/about.htm>.

The transgender population experiences particular difficulties in obtaining and receiving healthcare. A 2011 Report -- National Healthcare Disparities Report -- released by the United States Department of Health and Human Services Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality - found that about 30% of transgender people postponed care when sick or injured and postponed preventive health care due to discrimination and disrespect by providers. They also found that one in five transgender people has been denied services by a doctor or other providers due to their gender. Racial and ethnic minority transgender people are more likely to be denied services. <http://www.ahrq.gov/research/findings/nhqrdr/nhqrdr11/lgbt.html>.

By modernizing the Elliott Larsen Act the legislature can send a strong message that helps to reduce stigma and, in the long-term, reduce inequalities that will positively impact the health of Michigan's diverse populations.

Thank you for exercising your leadership and taking action now.